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Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The current report presents the findings of the third quinquennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982. The principal purpose of the World Programme of Action (A/37/351/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, annex) is to promote effective measures for the prevention of disability, rehabilitation and the realization of the goals of full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and development, and of equality. It was envisioned in the World Programme of Action that revisions might be necessary, such revisions to be considered every five years based upon a report submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the progress made and obstacles encountered in its implementation. The report on the first review and appraisal (A/42/561) was considered by the General Assembly at its forty-second session in 1987, at the mid-point of the Decade; the report on the second (A/47/415 and Corr.1) was considered by the Assembly at its forty-seventh session in 1992.

2. The legislative bases for the current review and appraisal derive from the above mandates, as well as from resolutions on the situation of disabled persons and disability, adopted by the Assembly since the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992). These include Assembly resolution 48/95 of 20 December 1993, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report biennially on the progress of efforts to ensure the equalization of opportunities and full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the various bodies of the United Nations system; Assembly resolution 48/96 of 20 December 1993, by which it adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities which include a specific monitoring mechanism to further the effective implementation of the Rules; Assembly resolution 48/99 of 20 December 1993, in which the Assembly, noting the importance of developing and carrying out concrete long-term strategies for the full implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade, with the aim of achieving a society for all by the year 2010, requested the Secretary-General to report in that regard, in the context of his report concerning a long-term strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action. The Long-term Strategy (see A/49/435, annex) was endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 49/153 of 23 December 1994, in which it requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the Strategy to the Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Assembly, by resolution 50/144 of 21 December 1995, encouraged the Secretary-General to continue efforts to facilitate the collection and transmission of relevant data on disability to be used to finalize the development of global disability indicators, and to submit a report on that question to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

3. The current review and appraisal has three objectives: (a) to review and assess recent trends and emerging issues in disability policies and programmes since the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons; (b) to document the initiatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations since 1992 which have interacted with selected disability issues and trends, and to review and assess their implications for programme implementation; and (c) to submit recommendations to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action to the year 2000 and beyond. The report also examines options to improve policy development and monitoring of programme implementation, including issues related to the development of information, statistics and indicators on disability.

4. The data sources for the current report include: (a) country-level data collected by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat for the computerized United Nations disability statistics database; (b) survey data collected in 1995 for the report prepared by the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development on monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules (A/52/56, annex); (c) data collected by the International Labour Organization (ILO) for monitoring ILO Convention No. 159; (d) data collected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on issues and trends in special needs education; and (e) other official United Nations documents.

II. Trends in policies and programmes from the disability perspective

A. Disability perspective on development

5. The General Assembly, in adopting the World Programme of Action, took care to define equality for persons with disabilities on a parity with opportunities for those of the entire population. Parity in this sense is viewed not as a static phenomenon but one that would be fostered and maintained as countries engaged in economic and social development. The Assembly thus envisaged what can be

termed the "disability perspective" on development when considering options to further the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action.

6. Since the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, there has been increased recognition of the importance of addressing disability issues as an integral part of national development policies and programmes. Such recognition may be due to increases in both the absolute number of disabled persons and the percentage of the population with a disability in many countries. Moreover, as countries develop, they not only create new forms of societal structures but replace existing structures to reflect new approaches and the needs of larger and more diverse populations in a more efficient and effective manner. In recent years, many disability advocates have urged that increased attention be accorded to universal design approaches, which are defined as the planning and creation of environments that accommodate the needs of the entire population. For instance, the application of universal design in educational policies and programmes will save countries the expenses associated with making schools and the school environment accessible to children with disabilities. This will also save on costs associated with institutionalizing people throughout their life. An equally important consideration is that universal design can benefit student populations as a whole. In a recent comparative study on development planning it was noted that there were disabled persons in all population groups, and that the planning and design of development policies, programmes and projects that include the disability dimension as a natural element would add social value to the results of development activities, usually with minor or no costs.[1]

B. Issues in integration and mainstreaming of persons with disabilities

7. Universal approaches represent a relatively new trend in the disability field, but they also reflect fundamental concerns of the United Nations with both the social, economic and cultural rights, and the civil and political rights of persons with disabilities. These concerns obtained added emphasis during the 1970s with the adoption by the General Assembly of declarations on the rights of persons with disabilities;[2] the goals of the World Programme, namely, full and effective participation of disabled persons and equality clearly reflect a concern with the rights of persons with disabilities; and the Standard Rules direct special attention to measures which promote the rights of disabled persons.

8. The period since the Decade has witnessed increased attention being accorded to the participation of persons with disabilities in development, to a disability perspective in policies and plans, and to placement of disability issues in a broader human rights framework. Development participation in this sense represents both a means and an end. As used in the World Programme of Action, the term pertains to involvement in developmental decision-making, contributing to developmental efforts and equal sharing in the results of development. International development conferences held during the 1990s addressed the situation of persons with disabilities with reference to a range of substantive concerns and not as issues specifically related to disability. The human rights of persons with disabilities now are recognized to be less the concern of a social group with particular needs and increasingly a prerequisite for advancing the rights of all.

9. This trend is also evident in contemporary approaches to action on disability. Traditional social welfare approaches, characterized by an emphasis on providing assistance to persons with disabilities to adapt to so-called normal societal structures, are increasingly being supplanted by human rights approaches which focus on the empowerment of persons with disabilities and on modifications required of environments to facilitate the equalization of opportunities for all. The human rights approach in this sense reflects the complementarity between the social, economic and cultural rights, and the civil and political rights, of persons with disabilities.

10. The application of human rights approaches to achieve the prevention and rehabilitation objectives of the World Programme of Action are evident in the increased attention now being accorded to beneficiary choice, access to service alternatives and environmental factors. For instance, Rules 2 to 4 of the Standard Rules, on medical care, rehabilitation and support services, respectively, outline options that States may consider to ensure the effective provision of services to persons with disabilities. The measures outlined include several basic environmental issues: the role of community: level information and outreach; beneficiary participation in decisions on services; and community involvement in delivery and management of services. Social welfare professionals, as members of multidisciplinary teams make particular contributions to this process by their focus on the empowerment of persons with disabilities and their families to participate as informed consumers, and not as passive recipients, of services that are aimed at improving livelihoods and well-being.

11. The increased attention paid to human rights approaches to disability has led to the recognition of their

role as both a means and an end for the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Efforts to achieve the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the development mainstream have resulted in an increased focus on environmental factors that can facilitate or impede implementation of the three objectives of the Programme of Action: prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. Environmental factors affect all and, in this sense, environmental factors include the development setting for participation, accessibility issues and the differential impacts that individuals may experience as they interact with their environment. Several environmental factors are considered in Rules 5 through 12 of the Standard Rules on, respectively, accessibility, education, employment, income maintenance and social security, family life and personal integrity, culture, recreation and sports, and religion.

C. Trends in disability policies and programmes since 1992 at the national, regional and international levels

1. Policy instruments adopted since 1992

12. The General Assembly adopted, within a year after the Decade, two additional instruments in the field of disability: the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/49/435, annex), and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Assembly resolution 48/96, annex).

13. In addition, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific proclaimed the period 1993–2002 as the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, with the theme of promotion of the full participation and equality of people with disabilities.[3]

14. The Long-term Strategy presents a framework for collaborative action at the national, regional and international levels to achieve the aim expressed by the Assembly in resolution 48/99 of a society for all by the year 2010. The Strategy outlines a sequence of suggested actions by interested Governments for the period 1995–2010, together with associated targets, time-frames for action and an ancillary set of support measures at the regional and international levels to realize that aim.

15. The Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development noted in his second monitoring report on the implementation of the Standard Rules, the way in which the Rules complemented the World Programme of Action by their focus on furthering the objective of equalization of opportunities. The 22 Rules are in three categories, that is, preconditions for equal participation, target areas for equal participation, and implementation measures, and contain guidelines for an independent monitoring mechanism.

16. A third disability instrument, on special education, was elaborated in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, which was organized by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Government of Spain, and held at Salamanca, Spain, from 7 to 10 June 1994. The Conference adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education, and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education which contains guidelines for action at the national, regional and international levels to further the education of all children.[4]

17. Each of these post-Decade instruments are significant by their emphasis on country-level action with reference to: (a) specific objectives and associated implementation monitoring mechanisms concerning the situation of persons with disabilities; (b) the gender perspective; (c) beneficiary-centred approaches; and (d) a life-cycle focus on children with disabilities, from their full participation in the formal educational system to their active involvement in decisions on changes over the life cycle owing to age or socio-economic circumstances.

2. Treatment of disability issues by recent United Nations conferences

18. International conferences organized by the United Nations since the end of the Decade have addressed the situation of disabled persons as a substantive concern in the context of human rights, development and demographic change, social policies and development, women and shelter. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,[5] contains in the chapter on equality, dignity and tolerance, a specific section on the rights of disabled persons. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development[6] addresses the situation of persons with disabilities in its chapter on the family, its roles, rights, composition and structure. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development[7] notes that people with disabilities are often forced into poverty, unemployment and social isolation. The Programme of Action addresses disability issues in three main chapters, on the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and reduction of unemployment,

and social integration. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995[8] addressed the situation of women who face barriers to advancement and empowerment because of disability and other factors. Strategic objective B.1(a) of the Platform for Action urges Governments to advance equal access to education through measures to eliminate discrimination on the basis of both gender and disability. The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)[9] includes among its commitment on adequate shelter for all the objective of designing and implementing standards that provide accessibility also to persons with disabilities in accordance with the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

III. Progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the period since the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons

A. Progress that can be attributed to the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond

19. In the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the World Programme of Action in 1992, the Secretary-General noted that, despite concerted action at the national and international levels, the data available suggested that progress in attaining the objectives of the World Programme of Action had been slow (A/47/415 and Corr.1, para. 5). Similar findings emerge from a major study on human rights and disabled persons, prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.[10] In both reports it was noted that an achievement of the Decade had been the provision of information which had contributed to an increased understanding and awareness of disability issues and of the situation of persons with disabilities.

20. By resolution 47/88, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the second round of monitoring of the implementation of the World Programme of Action and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and reaffirmed the validity and value of the World Programme of Action, which provided a firm and innovative framework for disability-related issues. The Assembly, by resolution 48/99, requested the Secretary-General to develop a long-term strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme. The Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond was endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 49/153.

21. The data available, however, suggest that few countries have established the medium-term targets for the period 1997–2002, as envisaged in the Long-term Strategy. Some countries have still to establish a task force on national strategy and convene consultative forums; others have formulated policy statements and set medium-term targets to achieve a society for all within the framework of national development plans; and disability issues are reflected in selected first country cooperation frameworks of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

22. Progress that occurred as a result of the Long-term Strategy can be attributed to two of its key characteristics. First, the Strategy is focused on establishing concrete targets to further implement the World Programme of Action and on identifying indicators to measure the progress made in achieving those targets. This is a significant consideration in the light of improvements that have occurred since the end of the Decade in the quantitative bases for policy analysis, target setting and indicator construction in the disability field. As discussed below, the first edition of the United Nations *Disability Statistics Compendium*[11] was based upon data compiled in 1988 from 55 countries; version 2 of the disability statistics database of the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat, currently under compilation, will cover more than 100 countries. Moreover, the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993–2002, has identified regional targets for the immediate term and medium term.

23. Second, the Strategy encourages countries to use flexibility, initiative and innovation in determining their own objectives, targets and indicators. While the data available do not suggest that such flexibility is resulting in the formulation of long-term country-level plans as envisaged in the Strategy, there is evidence that a number of countries are using bottom-up approaches to identify a range of practical disability targets appropriate to their own historical development experience, culture and conditions.[12]

24. Three difficulties may arise when implementing the Long-term Strategy. First, it does not provide guidance on

the formulation of options for lead-in activities to target setting under conditions of scarce financial resources, a continuing situation experienced by many countries since the end of the Decade. Second, it does not suggest approaches for setting priorities among alternatives for action. Third, the inherent flexibility of the Long-term Strategy may lead to greater concern with process than with concrete results.

B. Progress that can be attributed to the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

25. The second monitoring report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development on the implementation of the Standard Rules (A/52/56, annex) is before the Assembly at its current session. The implications of the report's findings for policy development, monitoring and evaluation from the disability perspective are discussed below.

26. In the preparation of his second report, the Special Rapporteur obtained a good response rate from Governments and from the non-governmental community: 83 Governments submitted replies as did 163 non-governmental organizations. While the report is based on replies from Governments, of note is the fact that data were available to the Special Rapporteur from 126 countries: Governments of 30 countries provided replies for which there was no input from the non-governmental community, and non-governmental organizations in 43 countries submitted replies for which there was no governmental input.

27. The Special Rapporteur observed that while no country had fully implemented the Standard Rules, the data available suggested that the Rules were providing useful guidelines for the drafting of disability legislation, the formulation of national plans and the evaluation of programmes and policies. Nearly 85 per cent of countries (70 of 83) responding to the second monitoring questionnaire reported the existence of a national disability policy, which is a precondition for equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, and 81 per cent (64 of 79) reported that the adoption of the Rules had led to governmental initiatives to promote awareness and provide information to support the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities.

28. The data available suggest that the issue of the human rights of persons with disabilities has obtained added importance in the broader human rights framework since the end of the Decade. In 1996, the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities considered the work of three United Nations treaty bodies concerning human rights and persons with disabilities: the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.[13] In addition the Special Rapporteur on Disability submitted information to the Subcommission in May 1996 on the social development aspects and human rights dimension of the implementation of the Standard Rules.[14]

29. Data on implementing the instrumental target areas for equal participation suggest that only limited progress has been made. The second monitoring report was focused on the implementation of Rule 6 (Education) and Rule 7 (Employment), since these are the two substantive areas cited in the World Programme of Action as being important to the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. With regard to Rule 6, data provided in cooperation with UNESCO indicate that a parent's role in decision-making on placement of children in special education is fully recognized in only 41 per cent of reporting countries (22 of 53). Children with special educational needs remain predominantly in separate educational systems, and rates of attendance are low in many countries. In over two thirds of the reporting countries (33 of 48), fewer than 1 per cent of pupils are enrolled in special educational programmes; integration thus remains a goal for the future.

30. Similar findings are noted with regard to Rule 7 and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for persons with disabilities in general. Data provided in cooperation with ILO indicate that only one fifth of the countries report applying ILO Convention No. 159, on vocational rehabilitation and the promotion of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, in its entirety. The measures that are least implemented relate to vocational rehabilitation in rural areas, cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities and availability of qualified staff. Almost every country, however, reported implementing measures on anti-discriminatory employment.

31. Both sets of findings suggest a greater focus on process than outcome. While the second round of monitoring found progress in the policy and legislative areas, it is unclear how much progress is being achieved with regard to improving the lives of disabled persons in instrumental target areas. Progress that has occurred as a result of the Rules can be attributed to the three characteristics cited by the Special Rapporteur. First, the Rules are concise and focus on a single topic, equalization of opportunities, which makes them understandable and accessible to both Governments and

people with disabilities. Second, their focus on country-level action suggests areas in which disability advocates can press for implementation. Third, their monitoring mechanism reinforces and assists advocacy efforts by the parties concerned.

32. Four years is a very short period of time in which to determine precisely those aspects of the Rules that can contribute to progress or may create obstacles. It is unlikely that the Rules would create obstacles, given their wide recognition and support. As in the case of the Long-term Strategy, consideration needs to be given to developing and testing methods and procedures for the formulation of options to further the implementation of the Rules, to deal with resource constraints, to set priorities, and to identify verifiable outcome measures.

C. Quantitative bases to assess the progress made and to identify the obstacles encountered in the implementation of the World Programme of Action

33. Data on disability have been actively compiled by the United Nations since the 1980s and were first published in 1990 as the *Disability Statistics Compendium*.[11] In the 15 years since the adoption of the World Programme of Action, however, the estimate by the World Health Organization (WHO) that over 500 million of the world's population are people with impairment or disability remains in wide use. Data on disability are significant by their absence in a recent review of data compendiums of select development reports prepared by the World Bank and by bodies and organizations of the United Nations system. Notable exceptions are the selected disability data included in the *Human Development Report 1997*[15] and survey data in the *Atlas of South Asian Children and Women*.[16]

34. Data collection, analysis and methodological work by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat indicate a growing body of national data on disability in the period since the end of the Decade but also great differences among countries in methods used to identify persons with disabilities. There is a need for international guidelines and standards for data collection on disability so that rates may be more comparable and more meaningful, both within and across countries. The Statistics Division has worked to develop statistical methodology for data collection and compilation on the population with disability, which is discussed in section IV below.

35. Concerning the use of available statistics to assess the situation of persons with disabilities, a report prepared by consultants for the United Nations Secretariat[17] indicates that it is possible to draw certain conclusions about demographic patterns, education and economic activity among persons with disabilities. The report was based upon the first version of the United Nations disability statistics database[18] and an analysis of more extensive material for four countries: Australia, Botswana, China and Mauritius:[19]

(a) *Disability prevalence by age*. In the four countries cited with recent survey or census data (Australia, Botswana, China and Mauritius), disability prevalence increases with age. After age 45, disability prevalence increases significantly with each decade of age. For instance, census data from Botswana indicate that persons aged 65 and over have disability rates eight times that of the total population, and survey data from Australia indicate a prevalence rate for severely handicapped persons which increased from twice that of the prevalence rate for all age groups for the 65-69 cohort to three times for the 70–74 cohort. The disability database suggests similar trends for impairment among the 55 reporting countries, with the exception of mental and intellectual disorders and speech impairments which are often higher among the young;

(b) *Educational attainment*. The disability database and findings from China and Mauritius suggest that educational attainment among persons with disabilities is considerably lower than that for the entire population. In Botswana, educational attainment levels for disabled persons are close to those of the entire population, although primary schooling is the most common level of educational attainment. In Australia, levels of educational attainment among disabled persons also are relatively close to those for the entire population up to the level of post-secondary education;

(c) *Economic activity*. Data available suggest that a smaller portion of the disabled population were economically active than the entire population. Moreover, disabled women had lower levels of labour force participation and higher levels of unemployment than the total female population.

36. An area of special statistical concern pertains to the collection of data on disabilities associated with anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance. Data available to the United Nations and from the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies suggest the existence of some 110 million anti-personnel landmines in more than 60 countries, which maim or kill an estimated 500 persons per week. From a development point

of view, it costs approximately 100 times more to remove a landmine than to place one. This is in addition to the indirect costs to society associated with lost productivity of those disabled by anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance, and the direct costs of their care and rehabilitation. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat currently compiles three sets of non-parametric and qualitative data: (a) demining programme reports in supported countries; (b) country and area reports; and (c) casualties and incidents.[20]

D. Factors influencing the implementation of the World Programme of Action

37. The first review and appraisal identified three factors that had influenced the implementation of the World Programme of Action resources, policies and institutional frameworks. These are considered below for a comparative analysis of trends.

1. Resource framework: knowledge, people, skills and finances

38. The global body of knowledge on disability issues has increased significantly since the end of the Decade. Advances in adaptive technologies and information and telecommunications capacities have resulted in new and expanded opportunities for accessibility and participation. These technological advances have been especially significant in fostering the establishment and development of virtual communities of interest.[21] National capacity-building and methodological advances in the areas of early detection and rehabilitation are contributing to improved levels of living among children and young disabled persons. Financial constraints resulting from continued low levels of growth in most areas of the world can, however, influence the nature and pace of research and innovation in the field of disability. An appropriate priority for the personnel, technical and financial resources to further the goals of full participation and equality remains an urgent concern. Data in the *Human Development Report 1997* indicate that developing countries as a group allocated on average in 1990, the most recent year for which there are comparable data, 2.1 per cent of gross domestic product on health; comparable data are not presented for the group of countries that are classified as industrialized.[22]

2. Policy framework

39. The policy framework for the World Programme of Action encourages a tripartite approach to its implementation and monitoring, which has continued with expanded participation by interested non-governmental organizations since the end of the Decade. Recognition in recent years of interaction among prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities has contributed to more effective implementation. Equating equalization of opportunity with the World Programme's objectives on prevention and rehabilitation provided a framework for emergence of concern with the disability perspective in mainstream development and furthered analysis and design of disability-sensitive policies. The World Programme of Action remains a valid and comprehensive framework for policy design and evaluation from the disability perspective.

3. Institutional framework, including coordination mechanisms

40. Interested bodies and organizations of the United Nations system continue to use inter-agency mechanisms for consultation and to promote coordinated action in support of the World Programme of Action. An emerging trend, however, is for interested members of the system to undertake joint action on specific disability topics, sometimes in cooperation with interested non-governmental organizations. For instance, the Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-fifth session, was provided with a brief introduction to the joint cooperative effort of the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with the Academy for International Education, a non-governmental organization, in the organization of the Global Workshop on Children with Disabilities, held at Washington, D.C., from 5 to 7 February 1997. The Commission's consideration of the item is reflected in its recommendation to the Economic and Social Council of a draft resolution on children with disabilities.[23]

41. The continued development of the WHO International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)[24] represents a critical area for coordinated action. The International Classification plays a major role in the coding and development of classification schema. While efforts are currently focused on increased standardization and use of less pejorative terms concerning people with disabilities, an emerging issue is the definition of environmental factors appropriate to traditional ICIDH concerns. In the Standard Rules, it is noted in this regard that:

> "The term 'handicap' means the loss or limitations of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others. It describes the

encounter between the person with a disability and the environment."[25]

Although the term "handicap" has proved controversial, those elements that pertain to handicap within the ICIDH system, particularly independence, use of time, social integration and economic self-sufficiency, have proved beneficial in identifying areas of involvement that the World Programme of Action must foster. Progress made in the implementation of the World Programme has informed the Classification of the importance of environmental factors in enhancing or impeding equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

42. Two new coordination mechanisms have been introduced since the end of the Decade. The Special Rapporteur on Disability, assisted by a panel of experts, promotes action, principally at the interregional level, in support of the Standard Rules. The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) provides a framework for the promotion and coordination of action at the regional level.

IV. Issues in the development of indicators on disability

A. Progress made in the development of statistics and indicators on disability

43. As recommended in the World Programme of Action, the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat has continued to work towards the development of a realistic and practical system of data collection in countries and to prepare technical manuals and documents on how to collect such statistics. Substantive accomplishments of Statistics Division since the end of the Decade include:

(a) The organization, in cooperation with the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands, of an expert group meeting on development of impairment, disability and handicap statistics (Voorburg, Netherlands, 7-11 November 1994). The meeting reviewed existing disability data-collection methods and standards, and identified in the light of that review a set of guidelines for use in censuses, surveys and registrations;

(b) The publication in 1996 of the *Manual for the Development of Statistical Information for Disability Programmes and Policies*.[26] The Manual was written specifically for programme managers who produce and use statistical information to implement, monitor and evaluate disability policies and programmes. It was prepared in collaboration with WHO, and received support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and a grant from the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability;

(c) The inclusion of disability for the first time as a topic in the revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*[27] for the year 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme. The Statistical Commission, at its twenty-ninth session, endorsed the principles and recommendations and supported the new and revised sections;[28]

(d) The preparation of a minimum set of impairment, disability and handicap (IDH) tabulations that should be produced with census data on prevalence of disability by sex, age, urban-rural residence and type of disability. Priority also is to be accorded to presenting tabulations comparing persons with and without disablement with key social and economic characteristics. The set of IDH tabulations is included in the year 2000 census principles and recommendations;

(e) Continued work on the handbook on census and survey methods for the development of impairment, disability and handicap statistics. The handbook is addressed to statistical offices and research organizations and provides them with guidelines on the collection of IDH statistics in censuses and surveys and their analysis and dissemination for policy purposes. Preparation of the handbook is supported by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands and SIDA.

44. The World Programme of Action also recommends that the United Nations develop systems for the regular collection and dissemination of data and information on disability. The Statistics Division is undertaking revisions and updating the disability statistics database so that it will present, in more user-friendly formats, data on disability and a minimum set of indicators on the situation of persons with disabilities and those without. As a first, practical step indicators are under preparation on the prevalence of disability, within the ICIDH framework, for dissemination on the Internet.

B. Information currently available for the development of indicators

45. National censuses represent a major source of disability data for many countries. Since the observation in 1981 of the International Year of Disabled Persons, the number of censuses that include disability issues has

increased significantly. According to information made available to the Statistics Division, in the 1970, pre-year round, fewer than 20 countries included disability questions in the national population census; in the 1980 round, this number increased to nearly 60 countries and, in the 1990 round, to over 80 countries.

46. In assessing the state of disability statistics in 1980, the World Programme of Action noted that data on education and employment status of people with disabilities were important for assessing equalization of opportunities. Few countries at present produce census tabulations on education and employment for the population with disabilities. This issue is addressed in recent recommendations for the year 2000 census on specifications for the tabulation plan for disability data.[29] Special attention is directed to presenting tabulations comparing persons with and without disabilities on key social and economic characteristics.

47. The International Labour Organization collects data on the monitoring of ILO Convention No. 159 and has received data from the 54 countries that have ratified the Convention. Since 1980, UNESCO has collected data on practices in special education; its most recent review, 1993-1994, contains data for 52 countries.

C. Issues in monitoring and data collection

48. Four issues emerge from the efforts of the United Nations to monitor and to collect and compile official national data on the progress made and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the World Programme of Action. First, although comprehensive monitoring of all aspects of the environment as it facilitates the achievement or hindrance of all three goals of the World Programme of Action is clearly important, few countries systematically collect data on environmental variables. Likewise, the areas of life where the environment can hinder equalization of opportunity, such as independence, use of time, social integration, economic self-sufficiency and life-cycle transitions, also have not been systematically measured. Third, resource constraints can hinder the collection of data on all important topics related to disability. Fourth, the success of certain data collection efforts under conditions in which resources are scarce suggests the wisdom of setting clear priorities in any data collection effort.

49. Data collection efforts cannot be viewed in isolation from the overall aims of United Nations programmes in the social and economic sectors. Options selected to improve the monitoring of programme implementation, including the development of indicators to measure and assess programme progress must focus on expected outcomes of the respective programme goals and objectives. If the measures of programme efforts demonstrate apparent success but desired outcomes are not achieved, an assessment of the particular determinants of expected outcomes is critical. Environmental determinants of programme performance and critical areas of life are often difficult to measure when resources are scarce, particularly in a census. The paradox is that measures of whether persons with disabilities are empowered to take independent decisions in their lives, to exercise control over their use of time, to plan and decide on use of economic resources and to prepare for major life-cycle changes represent the types of indicators that can predict whether desired outcomes are being achieved.

50. There is an observed tendency for the information collected on disability to relate to topics where the data are perceived to be the most accurate and not to those where data may be difficult to obtain. Often this perception has reflected a social welfare rather than a social development perspective, since data related to prevention and rehabilitation often are viewed as more reliable than data on equalization of opportunities issues. Collection of such information serves to reinforce a social welfare perspective rather than pinpoint those areas that need to be addressed to bring forth meaningful social change. Thus, care must be taken to ensure that the priorities for collecting data do not become the priorities for social policy. As policies encompassing universal design, empowerment of persons with disabilities as development agents and human rights are adopted, these polices would drive decisions on disability indicators.

V. Selected issues in accessibility to bodies and organizations of the United Nations system for persons with disabilities

51. It will be recalled that the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session a comprehensive review of the action taken by concerned members of the United Nations system to improve accessibility to United Nations facilities and information resources for persons with disabilities (A/50/473). Selected activities undertaken since then by the Task Force on Accessibility, convened by the Department of Administration and Management of the United Nations Secretariat, are reviewed below.

52. The period under review is characterized by a significant expansion in the range of information available in digital format via the United Nations Internet home page.[30] Providing information in digital format not only facilitates the increased and expanded use of United Nations information resources by persons with disabilities but it offers low-cost and reliable access for all to these considerable information resources.[31]

53. The Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat is finalizing a new guide to the United Nations building and services for persons with disabilities which is aimed at meeting the information needs of persons with disabilities at Headquarters, including staff members, delegates and visitors. The guide will be available during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and is being compiled in cooperation with Secretariat specialists and representatives of the non-governmental community.[32]

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Concluding remarks

54. The data available for the third review and appraisal suggest widespread policy-level support for the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action. The Special Rapporteur on Disability notes, for instance, that 85 per cent of Governments responding to his 1995 questionnaire for the second round of monitoring of the Standard Rules reported the existence of a national disability policy.

55. Programme implementation experience since the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond, provide useful frameworks both for advocacy and for the design and evaluation of policy options in the field of disability. Moreover, the decision by member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to proclaim the period 1993-2002 as the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons has provided a time-frame to plan and coordinate action at the regional level to further the World Programme's goals of full participation and equality.

56. A major lesson of the implementation experience since the end of the Decade is the recognition of the need to address disability issues both in the context of overall development and with reference to a broader human rights framework. This is evident in the observed shift in policy emphasis from the integration of disabled persons to their full participation in mainstream development. Participation in development and the adoption of human rights approaches raise issues of empowerment and of environmental factors which facilitate or impede participation by all. Concern with the broader human rights framework reflects growing recognition that addressing the social, economic and cultural rights, and civil and political rights, of persons with disabilities advances the rights of all. Participation in development and human rights thus represent a means and an end of the World Programme of Action, a view which finds support in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, in which the significance of social development and human well-being for all and the need to give to those goals the highest priority is noted.[33]

57. A second lesson has been the expansion of constituencies concerned with disability issues. In addition to action by Governments, which traditionally are addressed in international development instruments, there have been significant increases in participation by the non-governmental community and the private sector (including foundations) in practical action in the disability field. This trend suggests the importance of policy coherence and of modal neutrality when designing instruments to further the objective of equalization of opportunities. Modal neutrality in this sense refers to policy design which promotes local initiative and flexibility in decisions on implementation modalities. Policy coherence refers to the need to present the objective of equalization of opportunities in a framework that can accommodate short-term differences in policy preferences, which may arise among the various sets of development agents.

58. A third lesson is the continued validity of the substantive content and the multidimensional character of the World Programme of Action. The goals and objectives of the World Programme are reflected widely in the policies of Governments, as well as in selected country cooperation frameworks of UNDP. The World Programme of Action is also providing an effective framework for addressing issues and trends that have emerged since the end of the Decade, from the disability perspective. For instance, recent developments in information and telecommunication technologies have contributed to the creation of virtual communities of interest in the disability field, which are consistent with the accessibility and the institutional development concerns of the World Programme of Action. Virtual communities, moreover, represent an important means to implement the World Programme in the third millennium.

59. One issue that has emerged since the end of the Decade but which has not received detailed attention in the World Programme of Action is the relationship among population ageing, impairment and disability. Population projections of the United Nations that have recently become available[34] indicate that significant increases will occur in both the number and percentage of older persons in all regions beyond the year 2000. Data from the disability statistics database indicate that the incidence of impairment and disability increases significantly with age, so this trend has important and immediate implications for policy design. Current projections indicate that the percentage of the world's population aged 65 and above will increase by some 50 per cent, to 9 per cent of the world's population in the year 2020 from an estimated 6.5 per cent in 1995. Over the same period, the average age of the world's population will increase from 25 years in 1995 to 31 years in 2020. Moreover, infant mortality is projected to decrease by 50 per cent, to 31 per 1,000 births in 2020 from 62 per 1,000 births in 1995, and life expectancy at birth is projected to increase from 63 years in 1995 to 69 years in 2020. These projections suggest that, over the next generation, there will be substantial increases in the number of persons who will spend their lives with some impairment or disability. An urgent need thus exists to examine options to make environments accessible to all to participate on the basis of equality in social life and development. An associated need is to develop alternative frameworks to organize and deliver essential services in the year 2000 and beyond which effectively support independent living and can respond to changes over the life cycle, are community-based and involve beneficiary input in the determination of service needs, alternatives and cost-recovery measures.

B. Recommendations

60. Data on the implementation of the World Programme of Action since the end of the Decade suggest the continued validity of the World Programme as a framework for advocacy and policy design. They do not indicate any significant lacunae which would require specific research and analysis work on concepts, instruments or strategies. The data do suggest the importance of (a) coherence in policy designs so that they contribute to the full participation and equality goals of the World Programme of Action and (b) modal neutrality when formulating implementation options. The present recommendations thus focus on two sets of issues: (a) suggested priorities in implementation strategies; and (b) suggested resource allocations to strengthen capacities to further implement the World Programme of Action.

61. Experience strongly suggests that effective strategies for the implementation of the World Programme of Action are characterized by their linking of disability issues with overall development variables and within the broader human rights framework of the United Nations. Rather than focusing on the particular needs of persons with disabilities as a specific social group, the disability perspective on development reflects concern with the set of social, economic and environmental factors that contribute to the attainment of a society for all by 2010. The broader human rights framework introduces concern with empowerment and with accessibility, both of which are essential for the equalization of opportunities and self-reliance.

62. Experience also suggests three strategic areas in which action and resource commitments are expected to result in improved capacities to further the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action: (a) data and statistics on disability; (b) methods and procedures of inclusive planning; and (c) capacity-building and institutional development for a society for all.

1. Data and statistical development

63. Current and reliable data are essential for policy formulation and evaluation from the disability perspective. Improvements in the body of data on disability and in statistical methodologies have occurred in the period since the end of the Decade, although the data are currently somewhat limited for purposes of comparative analysis. Data collection programmes in place and under development in developing countries provide extensive opportunities to promote the use of new statistical concepts and methods, and the compilation of statistics and indicators. Specifically, the round of population censuses in 2000 and the revised census recommendations which, for the first time, cover disability as well as the further development of the topic of disability in national household surveys, will make possible substantial improvements in the availability of statistics on disability for analysis and planning at all levels, as well as for the projected fourth quinquennial review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action in 2002. With such considerations in place, technical cooperation, training and exchanges of information over the forthcoming few years can make a critical difference in the development of disability statistics in countries. In addition, the United Nations disability statistics database represents an essential system-wide resource which contains statistics for monitoring at the international level progress related to the

situation of persons with disabilities in countries. The disability statistics database also provides a framework that countries can use in the preparation of their own national statistical databases. Consequently, work by Statistics Division on version 2 of the disability statistics database should be appropriately strengthened on an urgent basis.

2. Further work on indicators for monitoring and evaluation

64. It is possible to identify three main topics for further work on indicators: (a) identification of indicators for short-term and medium-term targets for equalization of opportunities; (b) incorporation of environmental variables among revisions being proposed for the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps;* and (c) identification of indicators that link selected legal and policy instruments related to the equalization of opportunities.

3. National capacity-building for the disability perspective

65. Growing concern with the disability perspective on development and the emergence of new constituencies for action on disability introduce an urgent need for information, outreach and strengthening of capacities, with special reference to the equalization of opportunities for all. In the United Nations system, there is a need to build proactive capacities for the disability perspective in the social and economic sectors, including activities for development cooperation. In addition to specialized training and orientation of concerned staff so that they are better able to assist and advise Governments in this area, there is an urgent need for practical guidelines on inclusive approaches to planning, programming and evaluation.

66. A need exists for capacity-building at the national level, although the heterogeneous set of communities of interest in the disability field suggests the wisdom of modular approaches to outreach, information and skill development. For Governments, major topics of concern would include strengthening of capacities for inclusive-situation analyses and for determining priorities which would best yield improvements for all. For the non-governmental community, a major topic of concern would be negotiation strategies for advancing the agenda of specific social groups within the broad framework of a society for all. Information and outreach among interested members of the private sector would focus on issues of social value, as well as cost recovery of initiatives planned and undertaken to promote the equalization of opportunities for all.

Notes

[1] Ronald Wiman and others, *The Disability Dimension in Development Action: Manual on Inclusive Planning* (Helsinki, National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health in Finland on behalf of the United Nations, 1996), p.12.

[2] General Assembly resolution 2856 (XXVI), on the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, and Assembly resolution 3447 (XXX), on the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

[3] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 11* (E/1992/31), chap. IV, resolution 48/3.

[4] See UNESCO, "Report of the World Conference on Special Needs Education" (Salamanca, 7–10 June 1994).

[5] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

[6] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[7] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1.

[8] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1.

[9] A/CONF.165/14, chap. I, resolution 1.

[10] *Human Rights and Disabled Persons*, Human Rights Study Series (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.92.XIV.4 and corrigendum).

[11] Statistics on Special Population Groups, Series Y, No. 4 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.17).

[12] For example, the international technical exchange organized by the National Federation of the Handicapped of Iceland, in cooperation with the Icelandic Ministry of Social Affairs, to consider strategies and measures for life-enhancing opportunities for people with disabilities, which was held at Reykjavik from 1 to 3 June 1994. In the area of equalization of opportunities, the Guinean Federation to Promote Associations of Disabled Persons organized, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Employment of Guinea, the Western African Seminar on National Disability Legislation (15 May 1995), which was the first such exchange of its type in the region. The Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare of Ghana convened at Accra, from 21 to 25 August 1995, the first African regional seminar on national coordinating committees in the disability field. In Asia and the Pacific, the Government of Malaysia

organized at Kuala Lumpur in December 1996 an inter-country seminar on multisectoral collaborative action for people with disabilities, and the Republic of the Philippines will organize at Manila, in December 1997, an Asia-Pacific conference on issues and strategies concerning national coordinating committees.

[13] See E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/27.

[14] Ibid., chap. II.

[15] UNDP, *Human Development Report 1997* (London and New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), table 13. It is important to note that the data on people with disabilities range from 1985 to 1992. A review of the source data indicate that different definitions of disability are being used, that there are different levels of coverage among the population (the entire population or only certain cohorts) and that some data result from special surveys while others are census data. In summary, the data are not amenable for purposes of comparative analysis.

[16] UNICEF, *Atlas of South Asian Children and Women* (Kathmandu, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, 1996). Survey data are included for four factors whose absence or levels can result in impairment or disability: vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency, salt iodization rates and iron deficiency anaemia. The *Atlas* covers Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

[17] Lawrence D. Haber and John E. Dowd, "A human development agenda for disability: statistical considerations" (unpublished paper submitted to Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat, 24 January 1994), p. 3.

[18] DISTAT version 1, completed in 1988, contains disability statistics from national household surveys, population censuses and population on civil registers from 55 countries (see United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.17).

[19] Australia, "National disability survey" (1988), survey concerns severe handicap measures. Botswana, "National census of population and housing" (1991), census questions cover severe impairment measures. China, "National sample survey of the handicapped" (1987), survey concerns severe impairment measures. Mauritius, "National census of population and housing" (1990), census questions cover severe impairment measures.

[20] Demining data of the United Nations are available on the Internet at http://www.un.org, under the humanitarian affairs icon.

[21] The concept of virtual communities of interest is discussed in Tom Peters, *The Pursuit of WOW!* (New York, Vantage, 1994) and in Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York, Knopf, 1995). See also note 31 below, on the impact of Internet-based technologies on empowering interested virtual communities of persons with disabilities in Singapore.

[22] UNDP, *Human Development Report 1997*, table 13.

[23] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Supplement No. 6* (E/1997/26-E/CN.5/1997/11), chap. I, draft resolution III. The draft resolution was subsequently adopted by the Council (resolution 1997/20).

[24] WHO, *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps* (1980, reprinted 1993).

[25] General Assembly resolution 48/96, annex, para. 18.

[26] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.XVII.4.

[27] ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1, paras. 2.266-2.285.

[28] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4* (E/1997/24-E/CN.3/1997/29), para. 55.

[29] *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* (ST/ESA/SER.M/67/Rev.1), pp. 371-372.

[30] The United Nations home page is located at http://www.un.org. Interested users can access the full range of digital information available from United Nations bodies and organizations from that site.

[31] The importance of access to digital information resources to the well-being and livelihood of persons, especially among those with disabilities, is discussed in a thoughtful commentary, entitled "Internet for the disabled community: the Singapore experience", which was compiled by the Disabled People's Association of Singapore, a non-governmental organization. The Association notes that Internet technologies reduce the barrier between people labelled as disabled and the majority of the population. On the network, being blind or deaf or unable to walk constitutes no major impediment. Using Internet, intra-disability and cross-disability communications can be enhanced. The commentary is located on the Internet at http://www.dpa.org.sg/DPA/welcome.html.

[32] An accessibility guide to New York City has been published as the result of a joint initiative of voluntary organizations, the private sector and the City of New York, see *Access for All: A Guide for People with Disabilities to New York City Cultural Institutions (1992)*.

[33] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (A/CONF.166/9), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, para. 1.

[34] United Nations, "World population prospects: the 1996 revision", annex II, "Demographic indicators by major area, region and country" (unpublished document, 24 October 1996), table A.32.